United States Department of Agriculture **Forest Service** **Southwestern Region Forest Health Arizona Zone Office**

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File Code: 3420 **Date:** August 20, 2004
Route To: (2400)

Subject: North Kaibab Vegetation Restoration Project

To: District Ranger, North Kaibab RD

This letter serves as an evaluation for the proposed FY 2004 North Kaibab Vegetation Restoration Project submitted by Tim Howard, Silviculturist. Tim and I met and evaluated some of the sites in early June. The subject proposal was submitted to cover the costs associated with precommercial thinning of understory conifers and hand piling and pile burning of slash on the 1,000-acre project area. The project area is within the Lost Canyon Ecological Land Unit identified in the Lost Canyon EA. During the environmental analysis, it was recognized the precommercial component needed treatment.

Current vegetative conditions in the project area are markedly different from historic conditions; tree densities are excessive and shade tolerant white fir dominate the understory. All sites have an overstory composed mostly of ponderosa pine with some sites having low to moderate levels of dwarf mistletoe infection.

The primary objective for the Lost Canyon project is to promote the health and longevity of overstory trees by reducing competition and decreasing live fuel levels. Some sites have been identified as either existing or replacement nest stands for the northern goshawk. Silvicultural treatments are aimed at reducing the density of trees < 9" dbh to 240 trees per acre. The district will use their "Designation by description" method, in which an overstory tree of a certain diameter size is cleared of understory trees for a specific distance around that tree. Removal of white fir and dwarf mistletoe-infected ponderosa pine is the priority. Treatments will not normally occur between January 1 and July 1 in order to reduce potential impact from *ips* engraver bark beetles in associated slash.

The Lost Canyon Project proposes to complete the objectives identified in the Lost Canyon EA by reducing pre-commercial material. The treatment should work well to reduce live fuels, reduce competition, and help maintain lower levels of dwarf mistletoe infection. The monitoring activities which are to take place during treatment will help insure project objectives are met. We commend Tim for proposing to utilize suppression funds for this project.

/s/ Mary Lou Fairweather
MARY LOU FAIRWEATHER
Forest Pathologist, Forest Health,
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cc: Tim Howard, John Anhold